

School Committee Approves Williams' Plan for Lower Alden

By PHILIPPA MULFORD

When school opens a year from this September, 3rd and 4th graders will be in a renovated Lower Alden building, children in the Magic Dragon program will be in DJSHS, and 7th and 8th graders will join 5th and 6th graders in DES.

This is the grade configuration recommended by Superintendent of Schools Eileen Williams to solve the space crunch in Duxbury Schools, primarily at DJSHS. Enrollment projections indicate that grades 7-12 will no longer be able to be housed in DJSHS by the fall of 1997.

Williams' recommendation was approved by a 4 to 1 roll call vote by the School Committee last Wednesday night. Linda Smith cast the sole vote against the plan, calling it "an interim step" rather than an ideal solution to the system's space needs. "What I see happening is 2 to 4 years down the road we are going to face the problem again," she said.

Committee member Betsy Sullivan responded that resolving the space problem once and for all was probably not possible. "There are no guarantees," she said. "This is not a final solution."

Williams proposed her plan after a Space Utilization Study Committee offered 3 alternatives estimated to cost taxpayers from \$2.5 to \$4 million. The estimated cost of renovating Lower Alden and DES under Williams' plan is \$1.7 million.

While the plan is more feasible due to the lower cost, there was general consensus that it is not a panacea. David Tenney expressed concern about the affect moving 8th graders to a middle school will have on high school athletic teams.

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Sullivan's comment that this presents "a tremendous opportunity" for intramural sports for 7th and 8th graders was met with applause.

Karen Vaughn, a 3rd grade teacher, addressed the problem of a lack of library space in the Lower Alden building. Although ideas such as providing shelf space for books in individual classrooms and using the DES and town library have been discussed, Vaughn called the lack of a school library for students who are just beginning to read on their own "unacceptable in a town like Duxbury."

Williams indicated that work on program issues will begin immediately.

In other business, the committee approved several changes to the DJSHS student and athletic handbooks, again by split votes. Principal Wayne Ogden said a recommendation to allow students occasional use of Walkmans in some classes, like art, came out of the school council. He voiced some displeasure with the change, which was subsequently approved by a 4 to 1 vote with Sullivan voting against it.

A so-called "stopping to eat" policy to be added to the Athletic and Coaching Handbook was established by a 3 to 2 vote. Under the new policy, an athletic team will be allowed to stop only if the trip exceeds 4.5 hours; teams may only stop at fast food restaurants; the coach or coaches must accompany the team into the restaurant and remain with them; the bus driver must remain on the bus and be responsible for players until the coach returns.

Sullivan and Smith voted against establishing the policy, saying they saw no reason for teams stopping at all.

The committee expressed thanks to Dr. James Lyng who is retiring June 28. Dr. Lyng plans to teach a school policy course at the Simmons Graduate School of Social Work. He will also be consulting with the Plymouth Area Collaborative.